A SERMON

Preached in

St. *Saviour's* Church in *Dartmouth*,

July 24th. *Anno Dom.* 1698.

Together with

Some Reflections on the Opinion of those, who affirm, that the only difference between the Church and the Meeting-House, is that of a few *Ceremonies*.

In a LETTER to a Friend.

By *HUMFRY SMITH*, M. A.

EXON: Printed by *Sam. Darker* and *Sam. Farley*, for *Charles Yeo*, *John Pearce*, and *Philip Bishop*, 1698.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

Advertisement to the Reader.

The Author having committed these Discourses to my Disposal, I thought the Printing of them, would do right to him, and no small service to the Publick

Robert Burscough.

TO

Mr. *Robert Burſcough.*

SIR,

I Now ſend you that, which hath made ſo much Noiſe, and undergone ſo much Cenſure amongſt ſome in this Place: Namely, what I Preach'd, both in the Morning, and Afternoon, on Sunday, the 24th of the laſt month. You may not only Satisfy Your own deſire, in the peruſal of it; but alſo communicate it to Your Friends, as you think fit: Tho' I muſt tell you, that if either you, or They, have expected ſomething Extraordinary, you will ſoon find your miſtake. For notwithſtanding the Opinions, both of them that were pleas'd, and of them that were diſpleas'd, with what I ſhall ſaid; I am ſenſible of nothing, either much better, or much worſe, then what I am wont to ſay at other times.

My deſign, in this plain Diſcourſe, was not, you will perceive, ſome new or ſtrange thing: but to do that which every Preacher, without

doubt, is oblig'd to do frequently; to encourage to a Zealous purſuit of *Good*, notwithſtanding all the difficulties we ſhall meet with.

Becauſe it may be pretty hard for you to diſcover the crimes, which have expos'd me to ſo much anger, and reproach; I will let you know what I take to be the chief. Among other things we are oblig'd to, as Followers of that which is Good, I recommended, as you will find, *Conſtancy in matters of Religion, and Zeal for the Intereſts of it*. By which I was ſuppos'd to have, as indeed I had, a particular regard to the Religion, by Law eſtabliſh'd. And this I preſumed to do the Sunday before the Election of Burgeſſes to ſerve in Parliament: a time when I ought, as ſome think, more eſpecially to have kept my ſelf within my own ſphere, and not attempted thus to intermeddle, with things that do not belong to me.

This is the main charge againſt me, and I perſwade my ſelf, I have no need to fear from you, a very heavy Sentence. You do not, I am well aſſur'd, think it an unpardonable fault, to put People in mind, of acting conſiſtently, with their own Religious Profeſſions: Neither do you look upon a Perſon of my character, as quite out of his Province; if at any time he appears concern'd for

for the welfare, of Our holy Mother the Church of, *England*.

Whether it was not fit for me, upon that occaſion, to chooſe a ſubject, which Our Church in ſome ſort recommended to me, being taken out of the Epiſtle for the Day: And whether in the handling of it, I went indecently out of my way, to fetch in the things which have been diſlik'd: You, Sir, and the reſt that ſhall read my Sermon, are to Judge. For my part, I do freely own, that had I ſaid much more to the ſame purpoſe, and taken any other occaſion to bring it in; I ſhould not thereupon eſteem my ſelf in any ſort criminal. Yea I would much rather be accounted impertinent, needleſly zealous, or over buſy: than not to expreſs a juſt regard, for what I believe to be a very great bleſſing.

The laws of the Land, you know, Sir, require all the Clergy of *England*, and indeed the People too, to thank God for *reſtoring Our Religion, and Worſhip*, after the *Confuſions* of Several Years: yea to acknowledge it, as his *unſpeakable goodneſs to us*. And are the Inſtances of *God*'s *unſpeakable goodneſs*, which we are thus publickly to be thankful for, not proper to be mention'd by us? yea is it unſeaſonable to exhort to a due ſenſe of

a

a mighty Bleſſing, for this very reaſon, becauſe ſome of the Hearers will be ſpeedily in a capacity, to do that which may contribute, either to the Overthrow, or the preſervation of it.

It is hard, that things of the ſame nature, ſhould be ſo very allowable in one Sort of People, and yet ſo faulty in others. Tho' you and I, Sir, converſe but little with them, that will diſcover, what is done in the *Meeting-Houſes*; we have however met with accounts, of the extraordinary heat of ſome of the Preachers in them, on occaſion of the late *Elections*. A thing too is not long ſince accidentally come to light, which walk'd, it ſeems, in Darkneſs, namely, A form'd deſign for ſuch a *General Meeting* as perhaps, could it hope for the countenance of Authority, might one day prove as famous as a late *General Aſſembly*. I do not here that the Diſſenters have condemn'd their Leaders, for ſuch Practices as theſe: And will they not then permit us to have ſomewhat of the ſame reſpect for our Religion, which theſe men have for theirs? Whilſt the Profeſs'd Enemies of the Eſtabliſh'd Church are promoting their Cauſe, even in contempt of the laws in being with the ſilence, if not applauſe, of their Followers: are we to be cenſur'd and reproach'd, if we make the leaſt diſco-

See ſome Reflect on a Model now in Projection by the Presbyt. Diſſenters.

discovery, that we are not ignorant of their devices?

And having mention'd a *General Assembly*, I cannot but note, that the time is not yet out of memory, when a company of men under that Name, made *an Act for Censuring Ministers for their silence*, and in it ordain'd that *the main current of Applications in Sermons*, should run, as against some other things; so more particularly against *the defection from the League and Covenant*, *against unjust decrees establish'd by Law*, and against *the Plots and Practices of* those they call'd *Malignants*. And that in case any *Minister for his freedom* in this kind, should be *rail'd at*, *mock'd*, *or threatned*, *the Presbytery of the bounds* should bring the Offender *to publick Repentance*, or else *Excommunicate him*. This certainly was Such a zeal for their own way, as no true Sons of the Church of *England* would ever be willing to imitate. However the men of that Stamp may be assur'd, that we think as well of our Religion, as they can of theirs: And the Indifferent Part of the World, perhaps, will Judge, that we have much greater reason for it. *Aug.* 3. 1648.

You will conclude, I believe, that what I have thus said is sufficient, to prove it no unreasonable thing, for those that profess the Religion of the

Church

Church of *England*, to expreſs ſome concern for the welfare of it. But now, Sir, I am to acquaint you, with a ſhort Anſwer to all ſuch Arguments: an Anſwer I find very common of late, in the mouths of ſome Well-meaning People.

The Church of *England*, ſay they, neither is, nor can be, in danger from the Diſſenters: and therefore all the zeal that is pretended for it, in oppoſition to them, might very well be ſpar'd: For the Diſſenters are of the Church of *England* too: They have the ſame faith, and the ſame kind of worſhip, the only difference being that of a few Ceremonies. You may, perhaps, think it fit, to let theſe Papers come into the hands of ſome, who are pleas'd with this Notion; and ſo will allow me, to make ſome ſhort Reflections upon it.

It will be granted, I think, that this Pretence will not hold, with relation to all our Diſſenters from the Eſtabliſh'd Church. Such as deny the Eternity of the Son of God, and the Doctrine of the Bleſſed Trinity; Such as caſt off the uſe of the two Holy Sacraments: Such as deſpiſe the Rule of Scripture, and are prepar'd for all the Extravagancies of Enthuſiaſm: Such Diſſenters as theſe ſurely, muſt be thought to ſtand at a greater diſtance from us, than that of a few Ceremonies, As

for

for the men too, who are of more sober Principles; it will not Universally hold, that they preach no other Doctrine, but that of the Church of *England*. You have seen the private letters, which several years ago, I was oblig'd to write to a Preacher of some fame amongst the Presbyterians, and Independents, about some passages in one of his Printed Books, together with his answers. And you very well Remember, that tho' I was concern'd for such things as are own'd by Our Church, Ceremonies were not at all the Subject of that Controversy. Mr. *Flavel's* Fountain of Life opened.

But supposing the Doctrine which is preach'd in the Conventicles, to be always the very same, with what is taught in the Churches: the accord, alas, is not yet so great as is pretended. There is still a considerable difference, even that which is between such as *obey those that have the Rule over them*, and such as do not: that which is between such as preserve the *Unity of the Church*, and such as Schismatically divide from it. And this the Ancient Fathers declare to be a very great difference, yea as great as was between that part of the *Congregation of Israel*, which adher'd to their Leaders, and the company of *Corah*, who *perished* in his *Gainsaying*. *Cyprian*, de unitate Eccles. Oper. Ed. Ox. p. 116. *Chrysost.* tom. 3 p. 922. Ed. Savil.

But if this be so great a difference, may some say, it is in the power of the Governours of the Church of *England*, to remove it assoon as they please. Let them but take away the causes of Separation, and there will be an end of all discord: We shall then according to the desire of St. Paul, *with one mind and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.* That is, Let the Church who hath given no real ground of offence, yield their cause, and go and joyn with the offended, and then the peace is made. This indeed is a notable Expedient, and it is pity that such a healing method had not been found out in former ages. Here would have been a present remedy for the *Novatian Schism*, which disturb'd the peace of the Christian Church, for so long a time. It was but for the Catholicks to have gone over to them, who forsook their Communion without sufficient reason, and then the Union would have been reestablished. Or in the Case before-mention'd, it was but for *Moses* and *Aaron* to have parted with some of that Authority, which was thought too much for them, *seeing all the Congregation were Holy*: and that Ecclesiastial Sedition would have been presently ended. Till our Dissenters shall be able to prove, that their Separation from us was abso-

Rom. 15. 5, 6.

Num. 16. 3.

absolutely necessary: which all their past attempts in order to it, sufficiently assure us, will be a very great difficulty for them. *That carnal thing*, as St. *Paul* accounts it, enters the very Constitution of their Religious Assemblies, and makes them Essentially differ, from such as are held in the Unity of Christ's Church. 1 *Cor.* 3. 3. *Gal.* 5. 20.

But could some wonderful Art at length be found out to heal their Schism, notwithstanding their adherence to the Principles, on which they made a very unnecessary division; The difference between the Church and the Meeting-House, would yet be manifestly greater than that of a few Ceremonies. It cannot yet be forgoten, that the Dissenters once violently seiz'd, that which they now seem so willing, to have freely deliver'd up to them, the legal Establishment of our National Church. Having open'd their way, through the *Greatest of it's Defenders*, down they threw it, and set up themselves. And when this was done, had we still the same Church of *England* which we had before, only abating a few Ceremonies? Did the Enemies of the Reformation rejoyce in, and the Friends of it lament, no greater a change than that? Certainly the Learned even at *Geneva*, were of another Opinion: For when *Diodati*, and the Other Mini- Vide Epistol. Jo. Diodati, ad Theolog. Westmonast.

Ministers there, were courted by the Assembly of Divines, to approve the Proceedings in *England*, their Answer was, That now a Church was rent In pieces, which was *the Eye, and Excellency of all the Churches, Christ's own choice purchase, and peculiar; and that they perfectly trembled with horror, at the deformity, which was brought on the most beautiful face of it.*

It must certainly be no difficulty to shew, that even our moderate Dissenters disagree from the Church of *England*, in matters of no small importance. Yea that they have Expressed a huge dislike, of some very considerable things in it: Which are however Sufficiently Justified by the Suffrage of other Reformed Churches, by the Practice of the purest and most primitive times, and, which is above all by the Word of God it's self. Lest any that favour the Separation, should consider this as too Severe a Charge, I will mention a few Particulars, wherein I am confident, it may at any time be fully made out.

Amongst these I am sure you will allow me to name, *The Government of the Church by Bishops.* You have Sir, with so much strength of Reason, and such clear Evidence asserted that Government, Making it so plainly appear, to have a Sufficient Foundation in Holy Scripture, and to have

have been of Constant, and only Use, in the Christian Church, in all times, and all Countries, till the Presbyterian Discipline was first set up, in a few places, in the last Age: that I believe the most learned of the Adversaries, will deliberate yet longer, ere they will pretend to answer your Discourse on that Subject. Indeed the Great Patrons of that Model, which now by all means would Supplant Episcopacy, were abundantly sensible of the novelty of the thing. And instead of recommending it to others, were ready at first to make Apologies for it themselves, as an Expedient they were forced upon, even against their own Inclination: Being willing, if it had been possible for them, to retain what was justified by the unquestionable practice of the purest Ages.

A Treat. of Ch. Government, Pub. *An. Dom.* 1692.

Disciplinam qualem habuit vetus Ecclesia nobis de esse neque nos diffitemur Sed cujus erit æquitatis nos everſæ disciplinæ ab iis accusari, qui & eam soli penitus Sustulerunt, & cum postlimmio reducere conaremur, nobis hactenus obstiterunt. Calvin in Epist. ad Card. Sadol.

Quod Si nunc Anglicanæ Ecclesiæ instauratæque, Suorum Episcoporum & Archi-Episcoporum Auctoritate Suffultæ perstant? Quemadmodum hoc illi nostra memoria contigit, ut ejus Ordinis homines non tantum insignes Dei Martyres, sed etiam Præstantissimos Pastores ac Doctores habuerit, fruatur Sane ista Singulari Dei beneficentia, quæ utinam sit illi perpetua. Beza ad Tract. de minist: Ev. grad. ad. Had. Saray. c. 18.

Should any Society of Christians undertake to change the Observation of the Lord's-Day, from the first, to the third, or fourth, or any other of the Week: the boldness of such an attempt, would doubtless be very Severely censured; unless

the

the Men were able to plead, that it was not matter of choice, but the effect of some very great Necessity. Now I verily believe, that the presumption is in no sort less, of wilfully throwing down Episcopacy, to fill the Room of it, with some new Contrivance. Has the Lord's Day sufficient Warrant from Holy Scripture? so has that Form of Church-Government. Is the one confirm'd by the undoubted Practice of the Catholick Church in all Ages? so is the other also. Indeed the mischief of Innovation appears to me, much greater in the Case of Bishops, than it could be in that of the Lord's-Day. Were we obliged by some new Law, to meet together upon another day of the week, and not the first: there would be only the change of a Circumstance of Worship, which was of Divine Institution.

Discimus quidem ex hoc loco, non eam fuisse tunc æqualitatem inter Ecclesiæ Ministros, quin unus aliquis Autoritate & consilio præesset. *Calvin.* Com. in Tit. 1. 5.

But should the Order of Bishops be Overthrown, to make room for those Teachers, who are so much offended at it; there is too much Reason to conclude, that somewhat essentially necessary, at least to the well-being of the Church, would then be wanting. The Authority of them who were *Ambassadors for Christ*, and had *the Ministery of Reconciliation*, hath been undoubtedly

edly conveigh'd down, by a Succeſſion of Biſhops, in the Chriſtian Church. And putting aſide that Succeſſion. I ſhould be glad to learn a way, how any Perſon can juſtly pretend a Commiſſion, to tranſact with the People the great Buſineſs of their Souls, and ſpeak to them in the Name of the Lord.

Another thing which I ſhall not ſcruple to mention, as a matter of importance, wherein we differ from the Diſſenters, is an *Excellent Liturgy*. We of the Church of *England* do publickly Worſhip God, by the uſe of known Forms, compil'd at firſt with much care and ſtudy, by the Glorious Martyrs of our Reformation, and abundantly approv'd ſince, by the beſt, the wiſeſt, and moſt learned Men: Whereas on the other hand, the Diſſenters in their Meeting-Houſes do only offer up unto the moſt High, ſuch a ſervice as the Premeditation, Or perhaps, the preſent Invention of their ſeveral Preachers ſhall be able to furniſh. This certainly is a conſiderable difference, and that the advantage is much on our ſide, muſt needs be very plain to any unprejudiced Perſon. Putting aſide the regard we ought to have for the Authority, and example of our Lord Chriſt, who both taught, and commanded his Diſciples, to make uſe of a Form when they pray'd:

Mat. 6. 9. *Luke* 11. 2.

pray'd: Not considering the undoubted practice, both of the Jewish, and the Christian Church, which is manifestly for us: yea particularly the practice of those Churches, a nearer resemblance to which, some men express so great a value for, calling them the *best Reformed*: I say, Omitting all these Considerations, which would strongly conclude for a preference to Publick Forms, above the Compositions, or Ex-tempore-Effusions of private Persons: I would venture, to appeal in this matter to the Common Sense, even of any Judicious Dissenters themselves, who would but Seriously think upon it. Such Persons cannot but say, that the Liturgy of the Church of *England* was contriv'd, by men of Considerable Abilities for such a work: the fame of their great Learning, and Sincerity, being unquestionable in the World. And can they who are so diligent to find out somewhat to Scruple at in this Liturgy, imagine that every Preacher in a Conventicle is qualified to frame a better, and more acceptable Service? Yea can such Preachers be suppos'd able to do this anew, once or twice every Week, and that, as many of them seem willing to have it understood, without thinking beforehand on the words they are to utter? Were the Ex-tempore-Prayers of some of the most eminent for that faculty,

but

but put in Writing, that so they might be duly Examin'd as some passages of that kind were not long since in a Neighbouring Kingdom: It might, perhaps, then abundantly appear, that they who are so fond of such performances, have the least reason, of any in the World, to criticize on the Prayers of Our Church, and censure the defects of them. See Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence.

But a Liturgy, may Some say, would be a tolerable thing, were it of a different Make, from that of the Church of *England*: Wherein several of those Forms are to be met with, which are still of Use amongst the Papists. And this now some People look upon, as a terrible Objection against the Book of Common-Prayer. Whereas You well know, Sir, that 'tis rather a considerable Proof of it's Excellency. We have In it, the *Lords Prayer*, the *Apostles Creed*, the *Gloria Patri*, *Te Deum*, and some other Forms of Prayer, Thanksgiving, and Confession of Faith, which the Romanists make Use of. But then our agreement with them in these instances is, because, besides the Corruptions they have added, they still retain many Things which are pure, and primitive. The business of those Excellent Men who framed our Liturgy, was not to make a new Religion, but to reform the Old.

Passim variæ a variis Reformationis Autoribus conditæ & præscriptæ sunt. S. Liturgiæ formulæ simplices & puræ in Germania, Gallia, Anglia, Scotia, Belgio, &c. quam minimum fieri potuit ab antiquis formulis Primitivæ Ecclesiæ abscedentes. Ludovicus Capellus Thes. Salm. Th. de Liturg. par. 3. Th. 6.

Whence, as a most learned Forreigner has observ'd, the first Authors of the Reformation not only in *England*, but also in *Germany*, *France*, *Scotland*, the *Netherlands*, &c. prescrib'd Forms of publick Prayer, *differing as little as possible, from the Ancient Forms of the Primitive Church.*

And indeed we begin every Day to be more and more convinced of the great Wisdom, and Piety, of our first Reformers, in retaining those ancient Forms, in our Publick Service. The late growth of Heresy amongst us, makes us too sensible of what Consequence it is, to keep up the fences against it. In an Age so fruitful of Monstrous Opinions, if the People know nothing beforehand of the Prayers, and Praises, they are to joyn in; they cannot be certain, whether they shall offer up a Service leven'd with *Arrianism*, or *Socinianism*, or some other Abomination, destructive of the Common Principles of Christianity. But as they appear in God's presence, to speak into him in the voice of his Church; as they are sure to keep to the same *Forms of sound Words*, which have been made use of to express the true Faith, by the most Glorious Defenders of it, in ancient time, they are secure from the fear,

of

of offering an unholy thing before the Lord, or blaſpheming that Name which they pretend to glorify.

Another Difference between the Church and the Meeting-houſe is, that one requires *External Worſhip*, and the other hath but little regard for it. And this I take to be as great a difference, as that between Obedience to a Divine Precept, and the neglect of it. *O come let us worſhip, and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker:* Thus in the Jewiſh Church, they encouraged one another to their Duty, in that divine Song, compos'd, as a learned Father thinks, on purpoſe for the Reformation of *Joſiah*. And that this outward Reverence is a Branch of natural Religion, to which we are equally obliged under the Goſpel, appears from St. *Paul's* Exhortation, not only *to glorify God in our Spirit*, but *our Body* too. In Conformity to theſe, and ſeveral other places of Scripture; our Church having provided excellent Forms of Devotion, directs, and requires in the Uſe of them, ſuch external Acts, as do properly expreſs our inward Adoration. But that the Diſſenters have very little reſpect for theſe agreeable, yea theſe neceſſary things, is not to be denied, I think, by ſuch as frequent their Aſſemblies. Certainly

Pſal. 95. 6.

Theodoret.

1 Cor. 6. 20.

when they are occasionally present with us, as we serve the Lord, they for the most part, seem not at all concern'd, to fall down on their Knees to Pray to him, or to stand up to Praise him.

The Excuse perhaps is, that if we Worship God in Spirit and in Truth, there is no need of such inconsiderable things, as the Gestures of the Body. But so to assert, is to seem wiser than the Church of God in all Ages, yea than Christ himself the Head of it. When the Devil offer'd him all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them, for a single act of external Adoration: as that cunning Spirit did not certainly set so great a price upon a trifle; so our blessed Saviour puts him in mind of the Value, telling him it was a Holy thing, somewhat which the Great King of Kings had claim'd as his Right, and therefore was incommunicable to any Creature. Mat. 4. 10. *It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* Were not bodily Adoration, as well as spiritual, intended by God, where he commands us to worship him; then this answer of our Saviour would have been nothing at all to the purpose. The Devil, we find, was willing at any rate to purchase that external Veneration, which is paid by falling down to the Ground:

and

and would the words of our bleſſed Lord have ſtopp'd his Mouth, and made him fly, if he had ſaid no more than this, *It is written, the heart is the Lord's, and with that we are to worſhip him?*

Indeed, Sir, I have often thought, that the Notion which ſome People have entertain'd, about ſuch external Acts of religious Worſhip, would go a great way towards the juſtifying moſt of the Idolaters that have been in the World: thoſe I mean, who have ſtill preſerv'd an awful ſenſe of the ſupreme Being, whilſt they have bow'd down to Images. If Bowing, and Kneeling, or the like external Expreſſions of our inward Devotion, be not due to the Almighty: How do People rob him of his Honour, in beſtowing them upon other things? Such an Opinion as this, could it have been depended on, might have been of admirable uſe to the Primitive Chriſtians, under the Rage of the Heathen. For then, according to the Temptations of ſome of their Perſecutors, when they appear'd in a good humour, the Champions of the Faith might have eſcaped the Axes, and the Gibbets, the Grid-irons, and the Saws, by doing a very ſmall matter; even the giving but a little of that ſort of Honour to an Idol, which God neither claims, nor has any regard for?

I might give ſome other Inſtances, of a greater diſagreement, than that of a few Ceremonies, between Us and the Diſſenters. But, as you, Sir, may juſtly think, that a very few words would have been enough, in ſo plain a Caſe; ſo ſome others will conclude, that if the thing I have been attempting, were even ſome new diſcovery, I ſhould deſerve but little thanks for making it.

The diſtance, it will be ſaid, is indeed too great, and they are engaged in an ill Employment, who inſtead of cloſing the wounds, are for keeping them ſtill open. And now to this Objection, I think, it would be a ſufficient anſwer to ſay, that ſearching Wounds can certainly be no hinderance to their cure: and that a different Method is ſo far from promiſing Succeſs, that it is likely, in the Iſſue, to expoſe them that ſhall be employed about it, to ſuch Correction as that in the Prophet, *They have healed the hurt of the Daughter of my People Slightly. Saying peace, peace, when there is no peace.* Certainly a Solid, and laſting Union can never be hoped for, till People will be willing ſeriouſly, and impartially to conſider, wherein the difference lies, and who made it.

Jer. 6. 14.

Not-

Notwithstanding the hard Censures, which some have so liberally passed on the Stiffness of our Church; It has not been backward to encourage any real advances towards a good agreement. But it is doubtless able to distinguish between true Moderation or Peaceableness, and such artifices, as are made use of, on purpose to betray it. For my part, as you know, Sir, that I was always very far from envying any favour, which Our Governours think fit to shew to those Dissenters, who approve themselves to be truly Conscientious; so if ever they shall begin to shake off their Scruples, and make approaches towards us: I could heartily wish they might be received, with all possible Expressions of Kindness, and Condescention.

But then I must own, that the Men of design, and intrigue: they that sometimes blow cold, and sometimes hot: that sometimes consider us, as if we were *Anti-Christ*, and *Babylon*: and at other times are ready to say to us, *Be not affraid of us, we are your near Friends, yea Churchmen as well as you*: I say I must acknowledge that such as these, have always been consider'd by me, as a very unaccountable kind of People. If they are for the Establish'd Church, how can they go, as they often do, to those Assemblies, which are founded

founded in this very Opinion, that the Worship of our Church is unlawful? If they are Dissenters, what are become of the Grounds of their Dissent, when they Joyn with us, as they sometimes will, even in such things as that Party condemns for most offensive?

The Character which a Dissenter himself is pleas'd to give of such as these, would dispose one to be more afraid of their Smiles, than their Frowns. For he tells us, as you have observ'd, that they give too much cause for us to look upon them as such, as *break all bounds*, and *leap over all hedges*: Such as would indeed support their Reputation with *Jesuitical Artifices*; but yet do the things which are most likely *to render them in the eyes of all, as men of flexible, and profligate Consciences.*

Vox Clamantes, Sec. 6.

The shewing the mistakes of a Pretence, which hath been made use of to no good Purposes, hath drawn this Letter you See to a very unusual length: I shall therefore do little more than only mention another fault this Sermon is accus'd of, and that is *Personal Reflections*. I do not deny that there are Several things in it, which bear hard upon some Peoples Practices: But if I have represented nothing as amiss, which the Word of God doth not also condemn, nor let

fall

fall any Expreſſion, which can be juſtly accounted ſpiteful, or even unbecomeing; I cannot, I think, be ſaid to have exceeded the Bounds of my Duty. Whether in this matter, as well as the former, I am guilty or not, they that ſhall read my Papers are to determine. Your Judgement, upon the whole, I particularly deſire: and that it may be free from all kind of partiality, I will be contented, while you peruſe them, that you do that, which upon other occaſions I cannot poſſibly conſent to, namely conſider me as a perfect ſtranger to you, and not as,

Your

Auguſt 30th, 1698. Moſt affectionate Friend,

and Servant,

H. S.

all any Expreſſion, which can be juſtly accounted
ſpiteful, or even unbecoming; I cannot, I think,
be ſaid to have exceeded the Bounds of my
Duty. Whether in this matter, as well as the
former, I am guilty or not, they that ſhall read
my Papers are to determine. Your Judgement
upon the whole, I particularly deſire: and that
it may be free from all kind of partiality, I will
be contented, while you peruſe them, that you do
that, which upon other occaſions I cannot
poſſibly conſent to, namely conſider me as a per-
ſon a ſtranger to you, and not as

Your

Moſt affectionate Friend,

and Servant,

A

SERMON

Preached in

St. *Saviour's* Church in *Dartmouth*,

JULY 24th, 1698.

Being the Fifth *Sunday* after *TRINITY*.

1 *Pet.* 3. 13. Part of the Epistle for the Day.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

PART I.

THE greatest Discouragement to any undertaking is the danger that attends it. Many things there are, which People would soon conclude fitteſt, and beſt, were it not for the Lion in the way; a doubt of their own Safety

in them; Fears, and Terrours, which draw them from the attempt.

Tho' the *Israelites* had so much Experience of the Power of that God, who delivered them from their bondage, and conducted their Armies; Yet upon the very Entrance into the Land of *Promise*, they are amaz'd with a Panick Fear, and even resolve again for the Slavery, they had been so wonderfully rescued from: When they

Num. 14. 1. heard *an evil report of the Men of great Stature, the Giants, the Sons of* Anak, *they lifted up their*

Verse 4. *voice, and cried, and wept all night: — They said one to another, let us make a Captain, and let us return into* Egypt.

And as it is thus in other matters; So, alas, it is too frequently in the things of Religion. Many would more readily espouse it, and the Interest of it, in a Season of difficulty; were not such a regard for it thought a dangerous thing, a thing that would expose them to trouble, loss, or even utter ruine.

Nicodemus was a man, who seemed to have been very well disposed towards *Jesus*: but he was a *Ruler of the Jews*, and there was no small hazard in a way which was cryed down by all the great men of the times, and therefore, tho'

Jo. 3. 2. *he came to Jesus, it was by night.*

The

The Diſciples, as their worldy Intereſts were leſs; ſo they expreſſed more courage, and reſolution. Defying the Danger, they followed their Maſter, through the whole courſe of his Miniſtry, yea Solemnly engaged their word, that death it's ſelf ſhould never part them. *Tho' we die with thee*, ſaid they, *yet will we not deny thee*. Mat. 26. 35. And yet when a mighty difficulty actually came, when the Multitude appeared with Swords, and Staves, bound their Lord and led him away: Theſe, men of Reſolution were ſubdued by their own fears, ſhrunk from the Engagements ſo lately made: *they forſook him and fled*. Verſe 56.

The moſt daring amongſt them all was *Peter*. He had been the moſt zealous in the Profeſſion of his own ſtedfaſtneſs; he gave ſome proof of his Courage, tho' by a Violence that was unwarrantable: and after the flight of the reſt, followed his Maſter Still at ſome diſtance: But yet at length he failed, and denyed him: Eaſily gave up the Faith, and the conſtancy, he had reſolved on, to terrour, and amazement.

Theſe and many more, are the ſad inſtances on record, of humane weakneſs. And yet all the while, as to matter of Religion, the affright and deſpondency are for the moſt part groundleſs.

less. People are scar'd from their Duty by the Creatures of their fancy, the *Mormos* of their own invention. A stedfast adherence to the things of God is not attended with the Difficulties which are ordinarily imagined. St *Peter* here, being now better acquainted with the tendencies of our holy Religion, and the Wisdom and the Care of Providence, thus bespeaks the Christians he wrote to, even in days of trouble and sorrow, *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*

In which words we may observe these two things.

1. The Christians duty which is here, Supposed: *If ye be followers of that which is good.*

2. The Christians security in the practice of this Duty, proposed by way of affirmative question: *who is he that will harm you? that is, There will be no body.*

Both these I intend to speake to, beginning with the first, the Christians duty here supposed: *If ye be followers of that which is good.*

Tho' the general design and aim of this Expression, seems clear enough; yet the particular Notion we are to pitch upon, as the genuine Sense of it, is not so manifest. The Opinions of Expositors being somewhat different (1.) concern-

cerning the thing to be followed, the *Good* here intended: and (2.) concerning the act, what it is *to be followers of it*. It will not be unprofitable in this case, to enquire a little, what they say of each.

As for the first, the *Good* that is to be followed, some there are that understand by it the *Supreme Good*, God Almighty himself. And so the Duty is the very same which the Apostle St. *Paul* recommends, *Eph.* 5. 1. *Be ye followers of God as dear Children*: And endeavouring to transcribe as far as we are able, the divine Perfections: being Holy, as he is Holy, Merciful, as he is Merciful. A thing which our blessed Saviour particularly requires from us in his Sermon on the Mount. *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, for he maketh his Sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.* Mat. 5. 44, 45. And then a little after. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* Verse 48. Some are of the Opinion too, that *Good* here is to be taken for that perfect Exemplar or pattern of goodness, Our Lord Christ: Who came to propose to the imitation of mankind, in his own person and actions, the highest per-

perfection of Vertue. And to be followers of him, is to walk by that pattern, expreſſed in the Goſpel as near as poſſibly we can, to put on his patience, his love his humility, and all the reſt of thoſe Divine Graces, which adorned his incompa-
rable life: as he exhorts us himſelf, *to learn of*
Mat. 11. 29. *him, who was meek, and lowly in heart.*

Again *Good* may be here taken for the Idea or Rule of goodneſs, which the Law of God preſents us with: that Divine Rule, which we are to ſettle in our minds, and to have our eyes ſtill at, in all the circumſtances of our Life.

The Revelations which God hath been pleas'd to make from Heaven, have this great end, namely, to give us a true, and full account of that Goodneſs, which our great Creator Deſign'd us for. This we are by a diligent Enquiry, and Meditation, to be familiarly acquainted with: and to have a due regard unto, in all our Actions. In all thoſe mazes, and perplexities of affairs, where profit ſeems to call us one way, and ſafety or pleaſure another In all thoſe various Accidents, and Changes, to which we are liable: Our Rule we muſt have fixt before our Eyes, and by that reſolve to be guided. We are not to enquire, what is advantagious, or what is agreeable to us, but what is juſt, and what is good: and that,

come

come what will come, resolve to keep to. And this last notion of *Good*, seems best, to correspond with the Apostles design in this place.

As for the regard we ought to have for this *Good*, that of *following it*, there is but little more necessary to be said, than what hath been already intimated. Only it may not be improper to note the different Reading of some very Ancient Copies. For instead of the word μιμηται Imitators, or Followers, they have it ζηλωται *Zealots*: which makes a very agreeable Sense. It is the Christians duty to be zealous for *Good*: to pursue it at all times with warmth, and affection, and resolution of mind, notwithstanding all the difficulties, and discouragements that lie in the way. He is to set up that *Good* which Gods Law requires of him, above his hopes, and above his fears: above every carnal Interest, or temporary Design: and resolve, that no consideration in the World shall either force, or draw him, to make shipwrack of a good Conscience. Cod. Alex.

In short then, to be followers of *Good*, is seriously and in good earnest, to endeavour on all occasions, to govern our selves according to the great Rule, or Standard of Goodness, the divine Law.

The meaning of the words being thus Explain'd, I shall for the farther clearing of this duty, endeavour briefly to do these three things.

1. Point out some of the chief Branches of that *Good* we are to *be followers of*: those especially, which the Apostle recommendes in this Chapter.

2. Consider some of the many Obligations which strongly engage us to it.

3. Offer a motive or two, to encourage your Zeal in it.

I. I begin with the First, to point out some of the chief Branches of that *Good*, we are to *be followers of*. And now in this matter, the Prophet *Micah* excellently directs us, *Mic. 6. 8.* Saying. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good*, he hath given thee an Idea of *Good*, a rule of what is just, and upright, placing it in thine own mind, or conscience: And moreover, a more exact, and perfect standard of it, in his own word, which is profitable for Doctrine, for reproof, for Correction and Instruction in Righteousness. And, behold, this is the sum of the *good* which he hath thus set before thee. *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?*

A prime branch, therefore, of the *Good* we are to be followers of, is *Juſtice*: A ſtrict Juſtice, towards all Mankind, Superiours, Equals, Inferiours, Our ſelves. *A rendring to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*: An owing to no man any thing: A being harmleſs, inoffenſive, upright, and ſober in our whole Converſation. The thing which St. *Peter* adviſeth, as the means of Securing to our Selves the Divine Protection, at the *10th* and *11th* Verſes of this Chapter, *He that will love life, and ſee good Days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they ſpeak no guile: Let him eſchew evil and do good, let him ſeek peace, and enſue it.* Rom. 13.7.8.

Another great branch of the *Good* we are to follow, is *Mercy*, love, kindneſs, and good-will: a being as Serviceable to our Brethren as we can, and never violent againſt them upon any injury received: willing to give, and ready to forgive: cloſing and Uniting with them in every lawful thing: The ſubject of St. *Peter*'s Exhortation, at the *8th* and *9th* Verſes of this Chapter, *Be ye all of one mind, having compaſſion one of another: love as Brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendring evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwiſe Bleſſing*

And then the other great branch of *Good*, mentioned by the Prophet, and which we are to be zealous in is, *The walking humbly with God*: A being duly ſenſible of the infinite perfection of the Divine Nature, of our dependence upon him, as alſo of our Frailty and Unworthineſs; and ſo offering up unto him, all the honour, worſhip, and adoration, that we are able: A being firſt well-grounded, and then ſtedfaſtly perſevering in thoſe religious performances, which he hath taught us are agreeable to his will, notwithſtanding all the oppoſition we ſhall meet with. The thing which Our Apoſtle recommends at the 14*th* and 15*th* verſes of this Chapter: Be *not afraid, ſaith he, of their terrour, neither be troubled, but ſanctify the Lord God in your hearts: And be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that asketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you, with meekneſs, and fear.*

In this evil World, which is filled with Diſorder and Corruption, the Church of God is ſtill militant: and the buſineſs of all the true Members of it is hereupon increaſed. To the religious ſervices they pay directly to God, they are to add thoſe Divine qualities, which relate to the oppoſition of unreaſonable men.

Such

Such is a Firmneſs, or Conſtancy in matters of Religion: A making a due Enquiry into the Reaſonableneſs and Excellency of the way we engage in, and then a being ſtedfaſt in it, in all circumſtances whatſoever: A being *ſteadfaſt and immoveable in the work of the Lord*, as St. *Paul* exhorts: or as we are directed in another place *Holding faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*. Such is too, Zeal for the Intereſts of it: Looking upon the things of God and Religion as worthy of our firſt and chiefeſt concern. According to the Advice of St. *Paul*. *Striving together for the faith of the Goſpel, and nothing terrified by the Adverſaries*: Or in the words of that Exhortation of St. *Jude*. *Earneſtly contending for the faith once delivered to the Saints*.

1 Cor. 15. 58.

Heb. 10. 23.

Phil. 1. 27, 28.

Jud. 3.

These are the main branches of that *Good* which we are to be followers of. And the firſt thing I propoſed, being thus finiſhed, I now proceed to the ſecond, To conſider ſome of thoſe many Obligations that bind us to it. II.

And here now, not to inſiſt upon ſuch as relate to us only on the account of our being men, We muſt be very ignorant of the nature of the Chriſtianity we profeſs, if we do not perceive it to be, a Divine contrivance powerfully to reeſtabliſh the greateſt goodneſs in the World. Tho' the

the Hypocrite makes use of it, as a cover for his iniquity: and some foolish People consider it only as an art, whereby to get to heaven without the trouble of a good Life: the glorious design of our Excellent Religion most manifestly appears to be, an Universal Reformation, and the highest purity, the making the Sons and Daughters of men stedfastly upright, holy, and good. This was what the *Messiah* proposed to himself as the great end of his unspeakable humiliation. *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good works.* And this is what every Christian is to look upon, as the very Business, for which he is new-form'd by the Power of God, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.*

Tit. 2. 14.

Eph. 2, 10.

To give a full account of the mighty Efficacy of the Gospel in order to this blessed end; reckoning up the several Obligations to a good Life, which it brings upon every Professor of it; would be a Work too great, much too great for such a Discourse as this. I will only very briefly put you in mind of a few of the chief. And

1. We are to be followers of *God, in obedience to Christ's precepts.* Our great Master, Christ, was a Preacher of Righteousness, and hath described

bed

bed the Strictest, and most excellent measures of it. He came *to fill up the Law*: to make it a better, and Diviner Rule, than ever the world was acquainted with before: to advance it to a perfection, beyond the Morality of the Jews, and all the Philosophy of the Gentiles. And now can we pretend to be the Disciples of such a Master, and express no regard to this his most admirable Institution? Can we call our selves by the name of such an Excellent Instructer, and yet trample on his holy Commandments in the conduct of our Lives? Mat. 5. 17.

A Son honoureth his Father, and a servant his Master: If then I be a father where is mine honour? and if I be a master where is my fear? Saith the Lord of Hosts. And the reasonableness of such an Expostulation is the same in our present Case. If Christ be our Lord and King, it is but just that we should pay Obedience to the Divine Laws which he hath delivered. If he be *that Prophet whom God promised to raise up unto his People*, we are doubtless obliged *to hear him, in all things whatsoever* he says unto us. Mal. 1. 6. Acts. 3. 22.

2. We are to follow that which is *Good in conformity to Christ's Example*. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips: He was a Lamb without blemish, and without spot: He was

the

the Holy One, and the Juſt: He went about doing good. As there was not the leaſt mixture in him of that Inſincerity, which renders all the paint of Hypocrites nothing elſe but a loathſome Deformity; ſo there were none of the frailties, and defects, which Stain the Beauty of the moſt eminent Saints. As you read the Goſpel you find that in his whole Converſation, He was Obedient, and Meek, and Patient, and Humble, and Free: without any appearance of roughneſs, and ſeverity, unleſs when the honour of his Father engaged him to a juſt Indignation, in the chaſtiſement of the Profane, and in the reproof of Diſſemblers. In ſhort, the Hiſtory of his Life is a continued Account of a mighty Zeal for the Glory of God, and of tranſcendent, and amazing good-will towards men.

Such was our great Leader, the Captain of our Salvation. And now to uſe the words of the Apoſtle, ſpoken on another Occaſion, *what communion hath light with darkneſs, what fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? what concord hath Chriſt with Belial?* How can they whoſe lives are a contradiction to all the Divine Vertues before mention'd, own themſelves the followers of the moſt holy Jeſus? How can rotten, and corrupted Members, pretend an Union to ſuch a Head?

2 Cor. 6. 14, 15.

Head? As it is a monſtrous thing for ſuch as profeſs Chriſtianity, to be ſo very unlike him, whoſe name they are call'd by; ſo it is a direct oppoſition, and affront to his great Deſign: ſince his Life, which was full of the moſt perfect goodneſs, was, as I have noted already, intended by him as a Pattern to all his Followers. He was converſant with men in this vale of miſery for ſeveral years together, appearing in the common Ranks of Peop'e, and paſſing through a great variety of different uſage, for this very purpoſe, that he might lively expreſs unto us the moſt uſeful Idea of goodneſs in the Words of St. *Peter*, *leave us an Example, that we ſhould follow his Steps.* 1 *Pet.*2.21.

3. Our Bleſſed Maſter having thus Engaged us to the practice of uprightneſs, by teaching us the moſt Excellent rules of it, and propoſing to us the brighteſt Example of it, brings a further Obligation upon all his Followers, even that of the *moſt ſacred Vows.* He requires that his Servants ſhould take up the moſt ſerious purpoſes of holineſs, and in the moſt Solemn manner, as it were, conſecrate themſelves to the *following that which is good.*

This was a thing which the Enemies of Chriſtianity could not but note, in the Primitive

Times, to the praise of that Religion, they so laboured to destroy. In that Epistle which was written concerning the Christians, to *Trajan* the Emperour, by *Pliny* then Governour of *Bithynia*; tho' he tells him, that they were a sort of People given up indeed to a corrupt Superstition, yet he confesses that they were such as had bound themselves by a *Sacrament*, not to commit Theft, or Robbery, or Adultery; not to be guilty of cheating, or perfidiousness.

Plin. Epist. l. 10. E. 97.

At our first admission to the Profession of Christianity, by the Laver of Regeneration, we make a solemn Engagement continually to conflict with, and to resist, all the Temptations that shall beset us, and to perform, as far as we shall be able, the works of Disciples: We bind ourselves by Oath as Souldiers to their General, to be true to the Service, and Obedient to the commands of our Master, and Lord. And in that other Sacrament of his Holy Supper, we Ratify and Confirm these Vows, and anew devote our selves unto him: We take up fresh resolutions of uprightness, and holiness: Resign our selves to his pleasure, and offer up our Souls, and bodies, as a Sacrifice unto the most High.

4. That all this Provision for a good Life may not fail of the end it aims, through the want

of

of Divine assistance, That in a most plentiful manner, is promised by Christ unto his Church. He hath appointed an Order of Men to preach the Doctrine of holiness, even till the end of the World: And he hath declared that he will be with them, to give that Doctrine a Divine power and efficacy; to make it abundantly sufficient to conquer all resistance, and beat down the strong-holds of iniquity.

He prevents with his Grace, disposeth the hearts of People by a mighty influence, to hearken to the calls of the Gospel. And then he dwells with the Beliver, His holy Spirit being enter'd into him, consecrates him into a Temple for the Lord. *Know you not*, Saith S. *Paul*, *that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* 1 Cor. 3. 16.

Of what force this consideration is, to oblige us to Constancy in all the parts of our Duty: to render us exceeding careful to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; it is impossible for you not be sensible. *Adultery fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness. idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings*, and the other *works of the Flesh*; must needs be strangely Gal. 5. 19.

unagreeable. and monstrous in them, who own themselves to be *led by the Spirit.* Yea the Apostle tells us, that these practices are such a profanation, as will meet with terrible vengeance:

1 Cor. 3. 17. *If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*

5. Because the minds of men are naturally selfish, and we are apt to be very heavy in the pursuit of the most Excellent ends, unless we are like to find our Interest in them: To all the former Bonds engaging us to follow that which is *Good*, God hath been pleased to add the *Prospect of Infinite advantage.*

He hath plainly told us in his word that this is the very Condition on which Salvation and eternal happiness are proposed to us: That this is the thing, which he indispensibly requires in us, if we will escape his fury, and dwell with him forever.

Indeed there are a sort of Artists in Religion, as I have already intimated, that have laboured to find out a much easier way to heaven, than that of a Constant, and Uniform Obedience: Men that have discovered a Method, for sparing a sweet iniquity, and indulging a bosom-Sin: yea that are for reconciling *God and Mammon*, the sinful cares and pleasures of this present world, with the assured hopes of a blessed Eternity. But

the

the new principles, and subtile contrivances of such as these, are nothing else but Juggling and Imposture. If the Gospel be thus, all the precious names we may call our selves by, and all the interest we may pretend to in the promises, will signifie just nothing at all, without a sincere abhorrence of every corrupt way. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.* Ro. 1. 18.

On these, which we have thus briefly considered, and more accounts, it is, that we are obliged to *be Followers of that which is good.* And such ties, such bounds as these, which imply not only *our Duty*, but our greatest and most important *Interests*, are, one would think, so strong, that they should not easily be broken. But since humane frailty is such, that it is too well known to deceive the justest and most reasonable Expectations; I will, as I promised, now in the third place, add a motive or two, to stir us up to this our great work. III.

The sense of duty, and of future rewards, is, alas, but very faint in many People: and they seldom reflect either on the force of the former, or the value of the latter.

But

But then there are a sort of things, which are suitable to their inclinations, and very apt to take their minds: Some present enjoyments, which they can see, and feel, and tast the real benefit of. And now because pursuits of *Good*, is not without advantage of this kind, I will mention two, which I desire you to consider. The *pleasure* in the *labour* of it.

Notwithstanding the frightful apprehensions which some People have of it, it is doubtless a *Pleasant* thing to be followers of that which is *Good*. It is to do that, which we see all the Creatures in the world besides, do cheerfully perform: to act according to the design of our nature, to observe the orderly appointments, and pursue the ends for which we were made.

It is to study, and observe, the most reasonable and Excellent laws: the *statutes of the Great God, which are right, rejoyce the Heart, the judgements of the Lord which are true and righteous altogether: more to be desir'd than Gold, yea than much fine Gold, Sweeter also than Honey, and the Honey-comb.* It is to find out that *Wisdom*, which maketh a Man *happy, the Merchandize whereof is better than Silver, and the gain thereof than fine Gold*: that is *more Precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compar'd unto her:*

psal. 19. 8.

Prov. 3. 13.

her: In whose right Hand is length of days, and in her left Hand Riches and honour: whose ways of pleasantness and all her paths are Peace. Prov. 4. 8.

Indeed were there no other advantages of an honest sincerity in the Practice of Good, but only that inward peace, and satisfaction that attends it, These alone would be a sufficient Encouragement. The Blessed calm, and tranquillity of mind, which result from the Conscience of doing well is an infinite pleasure: and all the Violence and Rage of the World cannot render him that has it miserable. Under calumnies, threatnings, injuries; yea the worst Usage, which the malice of men and Devils, can invent: the mind of the Stedfast Good Man will be still erect. When other enjoyments are snatch'd from him, he will enjoy his very duty, and his own constancy will be his refreshment. His Soul will be full of ineffable Comfort, as he takes up that generous Resolution of *Job*, and says *Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me: My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live.* Job 27. 5, 6.

12. As a Zealous pursuit of *Good* is thus a pleasant thing; so notwithstanding all the attempts of those, who seem willing to bring it out of credit in the World: it is, and will be still of good

Prov. 4. 8. good *fame, and reputation* at least amongst the most discerning part of Mankind. *Exalt her, and she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her:* saith *Solomon*, concerning that Divine Wisdom before-mentioned. Set up the Law of God as the Rule of your lives, and it will be your praise, and your glory. Agreeable to this are the words which the Prophet said to *Eli*, in the name of the Lord:

1 Sam. 2. 30. *They that honour me, I will honour, and those that despise me, shall be lightly regarded.*

There are such powerful Attractives in vertue, and uprightness, as draw the Eyes, and command the regard even of the worst of men. They that will not be at the pains, to practice holiness themselves, cannot but look upon it as comely, and are even forced to pay it a kind of veneration. He that was doubtless very capable of making a good judgment, tells us, *That the righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour.* He is wiser, and greater, his aims are more generous, and noble: and notwithstanding all the difference which may appear in the outward circumstances, the world cannot but be sensible of it.

Pro. 12. 26.

But then as *Solomon* there adds, *The way of the wicked seduceth him*, or puts a cheat upon him: instead of securing the purchase he desired, it leads him to shame, and infamy. The

The usual arts which too many apply themselves to, whereby to get a name, or mount up to greatness, for this reason that they are defective in point of goodness, do commonly overthrow the very end, for which they were chosen. For to walk in crooked paths, and to carry on crooked designs, to manage tricks, and live in disguise; to halt between two Opinions, and hypocritically to trifle in the great business of Religion make the Character of a very mean Spirit. Whilst a visible Sincerity, a Sincerity which will be constant to its self, and cannot change with the times, is a most desirable Ornament; and even he that falls with it, falls with honour and commendation.

PART III.

THE other thing observed in the Text is, the Christians security in the practice of his duty; *who is he that will harm you?* Who is he that is about to bring evil upon you? That shall, or will do you any hurt or mischief? The import of such Questions as these, so common in Holy Scripture, and indeed in all other discourse, is

manifeſt enough. The ſeeming affirmation is a vehement denial: So that the meaning of the words is plainly this. Uprightneſs is the way of ſafety: To follow that which is good, is the ſureſt means, to preſerve our ſelves from hurt, or evil. Amongſt all the temptations, and dangers, we are liable to, in a troubleſome ſinful world; the beſt expedient for our preſervation, is, to be conſtant to our duty, and upright in all the parts of our Converſation. The likeliest way to eſcape, is to reſolve againſt every unlawful means, every ſinful compliance. A ſteadfaſt, and unalterable purpoſe of *Good*, tho' ſometimes, perhaps, it may not look ſo promiſing, will be found at laſt the beſt ſecurity. For unleſs we hurt our ſelves, nothing can do us miſchief.

This holds with relation, both to *ſpiritual, and temporal Evils* I. will ſhew the truth of it, a little briefly, as to the firſt: and then come ſomewhat more fully to conſider it, with reſpect to the ſecond.

First, *if we be followers of that which is good, zealous and* reſolved for our duty, *None ſhall do us any ſpiritual miſchief*: No temptation ſhall be too ſtrong for us, and cauſe us to fall. Our ſpiritual Enemies, againſt whom, ſo often, and with ſo much reaſon, we are exhorted to watch;

never

never do, nor can prevail upon us, by open force, but only through our carelessness, neglect, or inadvertency. Captivate us they often do, by stratagem, or surprize; but they cannot by plain Violence: Like sly Thieves, wait for an Opportunity to creep into the house, at some neglected Window, but are not able to break the Door. St. *James* tells us, that *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed*: that is, when his sensual desires obtain a consent to a Temptation, which could not prevail without it. Answerable to which is that advice of *Solomon*, about keeping the heart: *Keep it with diligence*, saith he, and the reason he adds is this, *for out of it, are the issues of life*. If thou securest thy self against thine own inclinations, and takest such care that they may not draw thee to an unlawful compliance, thou art safe enough. For every evil action has its Original from the heart, and cannot proceed but from a disorder there.

Jam. 1. 14.

Pro. 4. 23.

Of all the Enemies we have to deal with, the Devil may justly be reckoned the most powerful and prevailing. He is a roaring lion, and he seeketh whom he may devour. He is a spirit of much subtlety, and cunning as well as strength. He is too of a restless and implacable malice. And yet notwithstanding all his force, and all his

industry, cannot destroy the soul, unless it concurs to its own ruin. *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you*, saith St. *James*: and S. *Paul* exhorts us, *not to give place to the Devil*. How, may it be said, can we oppose, and stand out against, Principalities and Powers? can we that are flesh and blood, prevail against a mighty spirit, a spirit that commands in this inferiour world, a spirit whose motions are quick as the light, and is not hindred by any obstacles of matter? How can we do other, than give place to such a Being as this? I answer, that tho' in natural things, his Power is much beyond ours, bringing wonderful things to pass, as often as the Almighty is pleased to unchain the Chain, in which he keeps him; yet in moral things it is inferiour, and his most vigorous assaults are conquerable, by a stedfast resolution. He can dress up the bait, make it look sweet, and pleasant, chuse the most likely Season, and then propose it to our view: But being armed with that assistance, which God ordinarily bestows on his servants, we have full power to refuse it; he cannot force us to swallow it down. To be short, God is graciously pleased, not to expose us as a prey to our spiritual enemies: His Grace shall be sufficient for us, if we sincerely pray for it, and diligently make use of it.

Jam. 4. 7.

Eph. 4. 27.

He will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation, alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it. 1 Cor. 10. 13.

A meditation which might be recommended, as uſeful for ſeveral very conſiderable purpoſes: as to ſhew us the nature of aſſurance, and how it is that we are to ſeek for it; to give us a right notion of Perſeverance, and of the terms on which it is promiſed to the Elect: To excite us to confidence, and courage, and induſtry, and praiſes. But I ſhall omit theſe things, that I may go on with my other deſign which is, to illuſtrate this truth with reſpect to temporal Evils.

Secondly therefore, *If ye be followers of that which is Good, no one ſhall do you any temporal miſchief.* Uprightneſs is an excellent ſecurity againſt Calamities: the beſt Preſervative againſt miſery, and ſorrow.

But, it will be ſaid perhaps, how can this be true, ſince both the Word of God, and every Age of the World, have afforded ſo many inſtances to the contrary? They were men who had juſtly *obtain'd a good report*, yea men *of whom the World was not worthy*; who yet, as the Apoſtle tells us, *had trial of cruel mockings, and ſcourgings,* Heb. 11. 36. *of bonds and impriſonment: were ſtoned, were ſawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain with the Sword,*

wan-

wander'd about in Sheep-skins, and Goat-skins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented. For a ſufficient anſwer to this Objection, and the clearing of that Comfortable Truth it would overthrow: I deſire you to conſider theſe three things, which, in a few words, I will endeavour to make out.

1. That *the following* of that which is *good*, naturally leads to freedom from trouble, and danger.

2. That it gives a Title to the peculiar care, and Protection of Divine Providence.

3. That it changeth the Nature of things, and turns Evils into Bleſſings.

1. The following of that which is *good*, naturally leads to freedom from trouble and danger. It has a direct tendency to quiet and ſafety, being a Complication of all thoſe deſireable qualities, of all thoſe friendly, and agreeable virtues, which are ſo far from being offenſive, that they oblige mankind, and contribute to the common benefit of the World.

Mat. 5. 5. *Bleſſed are the meek*, ſaith our Savour, *for they ſhall inherit the Earth.* The Juſtice, and kindneſs and forbearance which make up the true Evangelical temper, are the likelieſt means to ſecure a peaceable enjoyment of the good things of this life: whilſt the contrary vices are things

that

that trouble the World, and are frequently observ'd to bring Ruine, and Destruction, on those that practise them.

στάσεις γὰρ που ἥ γε ἀδικία καὶ μίση καὶ μάχας ἐν ἀλλήλοις παρέχει ἡ δὲ δικαιοσυνὴ ὁμόνοιαν καὶ φιλιάν. Plato de Repub. l. 1. Sub finem.

It is easy to expect, that the wicked should fall into mischief, because they do it to others: that a bloody-minded Man should not live out half his Days: that a Catiline should perish in the Tempest he hath rais'd: But then they that are harmless and inoffensive, yea, that are kind, and beneficial, and make it their great Business to do good; these are out of the ordinary walk of Violence, and the Destroyer: they are commonly secur'd by their own innocence and usefulness.

Tho many, very many there be, that delight in wickedness; yet it is not agreeable to them to become Monsters in Villany. Now 'tis a cruelty utterly irreconcilable with human Nature, to violate and injure them, who are patient, gentle, and submissive, and do no wrong. When Persons of any common Humanity, are, through the heat of Passion, carried into an Extravagancy of this kind; it will presently grate upon their minds as they begin to cool, and they will not be over-forward again at things which cause such uneasy Reflections.

It

It is observable, that under the Heathen Persecutions, when so many just and excellent Christians were led to the Slaughter. The malice of their cruel Enemies could not venture upon them, as they appear'd in their proper colours; but was forced to make strange Representations of them, that it might destroy them. They cover'd them, as it were, in the Skins of Beasts, that they might raise the cry of the World against them. They invented all those hellish Accusations, which the ancient Apologists took so much pains in the confutation of, to render the Name of Christian, a very Criminal and Filthy thing. As well knowing, that the natural Features of a Disciple of the holy Jesus, would disarm the Rage of the Multitude, and melt them into Compassion and Love.

2. As the following of that which is good, is thus naturally productive of peace, and safety; so it is under the peculiar care of Divine Providence. They that are constant to their Duty, despising the difficulties which may sometimes attend it, have an Almighty Arm to interpose for them, in a day of trouble: they are under the especial Protection, the watchful Eye of God. This the Apostle assures us of, in the Verse before my Text: for having directed to the

several

several Duties necessary for him that will *love life, and see good days*, he subjoyns the divine Protection as the chief ground of such security, and happiness. *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

Indeed the ways of divine Providence are very mysterious, and the Rules, observed by it are past finding out. However we must both question the faithfulness of Gods promises, and contradict the Observations of every age of the World; If we do not acknowledge a particular concern of Heaven, for the welfare of the righteous, and extraordinary Interposals sometimes for their support, and preservation.

The word of God abounds with declarations, & assurances of this kind, I will put you in mind of a few. This was a part of that blessing, with which *Moses* the man of God had power to bless the Children of *Israel* before his death. *The eternal God*, says he, *is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms*: and hereupon it cannot but follow, that *Israel shall dwell in safety. The pillars of the Earth are the Lords, and he hath set the world upon them.* Deut. 33. 27.

1 Sam. 2. 8. Said *Hannah* in her thanksgiving. The Almighty hand of God is the support of the Universe, and thence it is easy to infer the protection of his servants, *that he will keep the feet of his Saints, and that the wicked shall be silent in darkness.*

This was often the subject of *Davids* Meditations, and of his Praises. And he admirably vindicates the truth of it, in a Psalm for the purpose, shewing, that notwithstanding the Objections which might be made against a gracious, and a wise Providence, from some certain Events; it Psal. 37. 23. was still an undoubted truth, That *the steps of a good Man are ordered by the Lord, and that he delighteth in his way, that tho' he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.* Yea this he confirms from his own constant observation throughout the whole course of his life. *I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.* And to give the surest ground for a firm reliance on the divine Protection, God himself hath been pleas'd to declare, that it is an impossibility, an utter impossibility for him, to forget the care of his People.

Isa. 49. 15. *Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have compassion on the Son of her Womb?*

yea

yea they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. *Behold I have graven thee upon the Palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me.*

And lest we should be apt to think, that all this implyed no more than that temporal felicity, which peculiarly belonged to the *Jews*, and so hath no relation to the times of the Gospel: We have some promises of the like kind too, in the New Testament. Indeed the Kingdom of the *Messiah* was not to be such as the *Jews* expected, a thing remarkable for outward advantages, and a worldly Glory. And our Saviour, we find, frequently warns his Disciples, not to deceive themselves with any such fond Expectation. However he sufficiently assures them, that they should in no sort be given up to the rage of the world, as men forsaken. *Take no thought, saith he, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? Or wherewithall shall we be cloathed. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* And at another place, *Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife or Children, or Lands, for my sake and the Gospels, But he shall receive a hundred-fold, now in this time, houses, and brethren, and* so on, as well as *in*

Mar. 6. 31.

Mar. 10. 29.

the world to come, eternal life. Whence the Apostle makes no doubt to apply to the Christian Church, the promises of this kind, which had
Heb. 13. 5. been made to the *Jewish. He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

Not to mention that wonderful Preservation, and those signal deliverances, with which God, in every age, hath blessed his Church; There is not, I think, an upright Person, but that as he reflects upon the occurrences of his past life, finds reason to magnify the care, and the bounty, of a favourable Providence. The dangers out of which there appear'd no way to escape, have easily past away: and the rage of the adversary been strangely becalmed, or as strangly disappointed. Unexpected aids have risen up for the support of a mighty difficulty, and as it was in the Case of *Joseph*, the malice of evil men have turned to his advantage & even wicked conspiracies have contriv'd his advancement, and his glory. And then,

3. The following of that which is Good, changeth the nature of things, and turns evils into blessings. It pulls out the sting of affliction, and even converts it into happiness.

If

If the envy of the world breaks out into an extraordinary fury, and God for reasons of infinite Wisdom, permits it sometimes to fall upon his servants; He still takes off the sharpness, and removes the Poyson, so that it becomes both easy, and beneficial.

At that place of St. *Mark*'s Gospel, which I mentioned but now, amongst the rewards of constancy, which our blessed Master promises to his Disciples, we find he reckons up *Persecutions: Children and Lands*, saith he, *with Persecutions*. Mar. 10. 30. And agreeably to this, St. *Paul* puts the dangers which threatned the Church at *Corinth*, amongst the Possessions of it. *Whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours*. 1 Cor. 3. 22. The things which the world looks upon as so grievous and troublesom, are converted by the Divine benediction into the most valuable goods, the richest and most useful enjoyments. Indeed this is such a riddle to natural men, as they cannot understand. If you tell them that poverty, contempt, injuries, and afflictions are profitable things; they will imagine they are as much impos'd upon, as the Roman Governour thought himself, by *Laurentius* the Deacon; when he presented him the blind, and the lame, for the treasures of the Church. However the real Christian. Prudentius περὶ στεφάνων Hymn 2.

ſtian is abundantly ſenſible of the truth of it! He well knows the healthfulneſs of a bitter cup, and the exceeding uſefulneſs of a ſevere diſcipline, and ſo that which others are ſo very impatient of, he receives even with joy, and thankſgiving.

A Perſon who is conſtant to his Duty, who cannot vere with every Wind, and act upon new Principles upon every change of Times: yea, who expreſſeth the ſame Zeal for a good Cauſe in a cloudy Day, as under the warmeſt Sun-ſhine: Such a Perſon, I ſay, as this, muſt ſometimes expect to meet with Reproach, to be evil-ſpoken of ſometimes, even by the ſame Men that once applauded him, and to have that now cenſur'd in him as a Crime, which once was eſteemed as Matter of Praiſe. But now what real Calamity is there in all this? Tho' ſuch Uſage may grate a little upon Fleſh and Blood, here is a proper Scene for the Exerciſe of a great many noble Vertues, which in the iſſue will adminiſter to much Joy and Satisfaction. Here is an opportunity for a Chriſtian to have his mind above Provocation, and to enjoy the divine Pleaſure of forgiving: And here too, is an aſſurance of Recompence and infinite Rewards; *Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſly for my ſake: Rejoyce,*

joyce, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

YEa, suppose the Rage of them who will be offended when no just Cause is given, goes farther then hard Words: and it lies in their way to injure him that is firm to his Duty, in some important Interest. In such a case, the damage he may sustain, how great soever, is but a trifle, and such as deserves not the least regard: Or to say better, the damage is no damage at all, but an accession of happiness; as we may learn from S. *Peter's* words immediately following my Text, *but if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye.* In short, nothing can appear so grievous and dreadful, nothing can seem so directly contrary to his Advantage, and destructive of all his Interests; but that he that is faithful to his Duty and his God, can look upon as the gracious design of Heaven, for his very great Benefit. *We know,* Ro. 8. 28.
saith S. *Paul,* that all things work together for good, for them that love God.

What hath been thus said, does, I think, sufficiently clear the thing I was to make out. The following of that which is *Good* appears the true way of safety, because it directly aims at becalming the Rage of evil Men, because it entitles to a Divine Protection, and because it turns ill Usage into

to

to Advantage. I will put you in mind of some good Purposes, for which the consideration of this truth naturally serves, and so make an end. And it is certainly proper,

1. To render us sensible of the Folly of a worldly Policy.

2. To rouse us up to a just Diligence, in securing to our selves so excellent a Preservative.

3. To make us faithfully rely on it, in a day of fears, and troubles.

First, The following of Good being the surest means to preserve us from hurt or Evil: We cannot but hence be convinc'd of the folly of a worldly Policy. *He that walketh uprightly*, saith *Solomon, walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.* He that observes no other measures but such as are lawful, and right; treads upon Firm Ground, and cannot, as we have seen, miscarry. But he that depends upon the fine contrivances of a carnal Wisdom, manages some secret design for his own Interest, or Safety, to the neglect of any part of his duty; at length meets with disappointment, and overthrow. The Wise Project deceives, and the mysteries of it are Expos'd to laughter and contempt.

Pro. 10. 9.

Of

Of this all Histories both Sacred, and Profane, afford us many Examples, to instance in two or three. *Ahithophel* was great when of Council to *David*, but hoping belike that a new Turn of affairs might make him greater, he deserted his Master and followed *Absalom*. And the advice that he now gave was answerable to the character of his Wisdom, subtile and politick, but not honest. And Behold the Event, the counsel of *Ahithophel* was defeated, and he was not able to out-live the shame, and disappointment *He saddled his Ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, and hanged himself.* No one I think, ever carried on a Plot with more artifice than he at first did, to whom *Ahithophel* revolted. We find the great address with which he betook himself to it, at large describ'd at 2 *Sam.* 15. But the policy was sinful, and opposed the laws of that Wisdom which is of God, and so soon issued in his destruction. 2 Sam. 17. 23.

What a mighty man had *Sejanus* made himself, bymeans of those wicked arts, he used, to insinuate into the favour of *Tiberius*. But he only contriv'd to himself a hasty ruine, * being tumbled down from his greatness and exposed to the scorn, and

* ——— Sejanus ducitur unco
Spectandus: gaudent omnes: quæ labra? quis ilh,
Vultus erat? Juvenal Sat. 10.

insults of that multitude, which once Ador'd him.

Thus doth Divine Providence frequently manifest the detestation it hath for a worldly Policy; Thus doth the Almighty shew, how easy it is with him, 'to frustrate the tokens of liars, 'and to make Diviners made: to turn wise men Is. 44. 25. 'backward, and to make their knowledge foolish.

Secondly, the following of Good being the true way of safety: the sense of what it thus is, should rouze us up to a just diligence in securing to our selves so excellent a Preservative. It should make us very careful to walk in that Path, where no evil can befal us.

Examine your selves and consider well the state of your own hearts: review the path which you have been hitherto in, and the ends that you have pursued. And as far as you discover errour and miscarriage, resolve upon a reformation. Study well the nature of *Good*, and get a right notion of the several branches of it. Consider what you ought to do upon every emergency what, in such circumstances, and upon such occasions, you ow to your Creatour, and what to your fellow-Creatures: what you ow to that Church into which you have been baptized, and wherein you hope to be saved. Be acquainted with the Obligations that lie upon you, in the several relations

in

in which you ſtand, both as men, and as Chriſtians. Conſider, I ſay, and ſtudy theſe things well, for 'tis, you have ſeen, a buſineſs of importance, the true policy of a Chriſtian, the art of ſafety.

And having found out what is good, reſolve to do it with thy might. Let no falſe ſhews of wiſdom deceive yon, No threatnings or reproaches diſcourage you, no temptation draw you aſide. Set up ſuch a ſtedfaſt and immoveable purpoſe as this is: 'In the way that is now before 'me I am ſure is my duty, and my duty being 'there I am as ſure my intereſt is too. From 'this, let the event, as to the preſent appearance, 'look never ſo diſcouraging, no ſeeming advan'tage ſhall ever divert me: No carnal conſi'deration ſhall ever diſſwade me. No, I will not be 'ſo cheated away from the defences and pro'tection of innocence: I will not ſo embrace a 'ſhadow, and loſe the ſubſtance.

Thirdly and laſtly, The following of Good being the beſt ſecurity againſt Evils, let us faithfully rely on it, in a day of fears, and troubles. When the clonds ſeeem to gather over our heads, and the increaſing blackneſs portends a tempeſt: when things begin to run into Confuſion, then fly to the ſupport of a good Conſcience, and caſt all your care upon him, who careth for you. Tho'

difficulties are on this side, and dangers on that: the Sea before, and the *Egyptians* behind: Tho the perplexities appear inextricable, and you cannot see through the disorder; yet expect delivery from him who is able to give it, *stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord.*

Take up, on such occasions, the Assurance of the *Psalmist*, and say, *my soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him: He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence, I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory, the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God.* And be ready to comfort others with the words he there adds, *Trust in him at all times ye People, pour out your heart before him, God is a refuge for us.*

Ps. 62: 5.

Indeed, tho I am not for troubling the minds of any with groundless terrours; I cannot but say, that the present face of things is not very promising. God who hath so often deliver'd this Church and Nation, seems still to hold the rod over us, and to threaten us with some strokes of his Vengeance. Tho we have been lately freed of our fears from abroad, there is still Ground of fear at home: We have sins the fatal Causes, and divisions the fatal Instruments, of Ruine.

Tho we expect no Fleets, and Armies to come and overthrow us; It is visible that there

are

are Papists and Dissenters, Socinians and Deists, men of many differing Religions, and more do no Religion at all, in a kind of confederacy against us: Aiming to pull down the strong-hold of our Sion, to level it with the dust, and bury it in Confusion. And now, my Brethren, what shall we do? Why, let us do these two things. Being Steadfast in our Duty, let us encourage our selves with the remembrance of God's gracious dealings in times past: and let us fly unto him, who only is able to save us, for the time to come.

1, Let us encourage our selves with the remembrance of God's gracious dealings in times past. Let us consider what the Lord hath done at seasons of great extremity, and enquire into the several methods of relief and deliverance: How it is that he hath formerly visited his Chosen, and sav'd his Inheritance. Let us consider that the ways of divine Mercy and Redemption have been often such, as no human Eye could foresee: that God hath deliver'd his Servants in the midst of Multitudes that have perish'd: that they have been distinguish'd by safety in Overthrow, and have stood unhurt in a general Ruine. Let us consider that God makes the sufferings of a few, the advantage of themselves, and many more. And let us consider that it is the

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 5. line 10. read Sermon, p. 6. l. 18. r. hear, p. 10. l. 13. r. Novatian, l. 14. Margent, r. Postliminio, ib. l. 17. r. Sussultæ, ib. l. 20. r. quæ, p. 22. l. 2. after few, r. Indifferent, p. 23. l. 9. for Reproaches, r. Approaches.